

**Statement of Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
Hearing on “Legislation to Promote the Health and Safety of  
Racehorses”**

*January 28, 2020*

New Jersey has always had a special relationship with horses. Our state symbol includes a head of a horse, representing speed and strength. And our official state animal is the horse. It’s a small state geographically but, surprisingly to some, the home of tens of thousands of horses. About a decade ago, the Rutgers Equine Science Center found that the horse industry in New Jersey was responsible for \$1.1 billion dollars in economic impact and generated about 13,000 jobs.

Horseracing is also a popular sport here in the United States. In 2016, there were more than 46,000 thoroughbred and quarter horse races and more than 38,000 harness races held throughout the nation. Wagers on thoroughbred races – a good indicator of the public interest in the sport – neared \$12 billion in 2018, marking the fourth consecutive year of steady increases. More than 30 percent of U.S. households claim a horse enthusiast who watches or participates in horse events.

That popularity has a positive impact on the U.S. economy. According to the American Horse Council, the horseracing sector generates \$15.6 billion of economic activity nationally every year, helping support almost 250,000 jobs. And with 38 racing jurisdictions in the United States, that's an economic impact that reverberates across the country.

The success of the sport rides on the health of its star athletes – horses and jockeys. A recent wave of deaths at California’s Santa Anita Park has put renewed focus on the dangers of the sport. Tragically, 56 horses suffered fatal injuries at the track between July of 2018 and November of 2019. Five horses have already died at Santa Anita this year.

When a horse suffers a catastrophic injury, the jockey’s health and welfare is also at stake. According to a study published in the Orthopedic Journal of Sports Medicine, the most common cause of jockey falls is a catastrophic injury or sudden death of the horse. And over half of all falls result in a jockey injury.

Today, we will be exploring ways to protect horses from injury and improve the general health of horses—from examining the effect

of track conditions, reducing the risk of injury, and the best use of medications.

We should all be able to agree that the welfare of the racehorses is of the utmost importance and that the sport should be safe. I am committed to working with all stakeholders to promote the health and safety of horses and jockeys. I am pleased to hear that the horseracing industry is continuing to actively work on proposals to further that aim.

Thanks to the diverse panel of witnesses for testifying. I am optimistic we can all work together to build a consensus approach that protects horses, preserves the integrity of the sport, and a maintains a level playing field.

I would particularly like to welcome Dennis Drazin, the Chairman and CEO of Darby Development, which operates Monmouth Park Racetrack in my district. Monmouth Park dates back to 1870 and hosts thoroughbred racing, including the prestigious Haskell Invitational. I'm proud to have the track in the district.

Thank you, I look forward to the discussion and I yield back.